

Yes, the business leaders in the tobacco industry deserve sharp criticism. Once this precedent of paying medical bills is set, the manufacturers of automobiles will then be liable for all accidents even if the drivers are speeding and intoxicated. Chocolate addicts can then sue Hershey, fat people can sue cattle ranchers. The whole notion that tobacco companies should pay for tobacco-related illnesses is absurd.

The tobacco deal does great harm, because it further undermines the principle of self-responsibility. The spread of this concept will not only push up the costs of medical treatment and the products involved, it could actually encourage the use of dangerous products. The response of potential users will be, "If I'm unfortunate and become ill or injured, the seller or the Government will be made to take care of me"—a very common reaction in a welfare state. To the extent one can lower the cost of one's own risky habit by socializing it, one is less likely to worry about consequences and more likely to engage in that dangerous behavior.

If this attitude toward consumer risk is not changed, the free society that we once had cannot be restored.

I'd like to see a spokesman for tobacco come forward and insist on recognition of the moral principle that individuals have responsibility for themselves and a duty to make choices and assume the consequences of the risks they take. My advice to him would be to give up the subsidies, demand freedom, and fight the social misfits who argue for collective guilt and collective responsibility. Any other course of action will lead to more evils.

CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, the women of the House have something to celebrate this evening. Nearly all—Republican and Democratic women alike—are members of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues. The caucus will celebrate 20 years of historic legislation and other milestones for women, families, and children led by the Women's Caucus for two decades.

Madam Speaker, an all-star cast will be on hand at the elegant Andrew Mellon Auditorium for the 7 p.m. dinner led by remarks from President Clinton himself. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will speak, ABC's Cokie Roberts, the daughter of former Congresswoman Lindy Boggs, will MC, and "Sweet Honey in the Rock," the award-winning singing group, will entertain.

Today, 50 of the 52 women of the House are members of the caucus. We are more than three times the group we were in 1977 when 15 Members led by former Representatives Elizabeth Holtzman and Margaret Heckler founded the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues. Resolutely bipartisan from

that day to this, the caucus has a list of achievements that boggle the mind. Here is a sampling from the honor roll of legislative landmarks achieved through the leadership of the Women's Caucus:

The Family Medical and Leave Act, the Violence Against Women Act, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, retirement equity legislation, child support enforcement legislation, the Mammography Quality Assurance Act, legislation that established the NIH Office of Research in Women's Health, legislation barring health plan discrimination against victims of domestic violence and against the genetic information of clients, criminalization of female genital mutilation, and policies requiring that women be included in clinical trials. There is too much more where that came from to name and there is lots more to come.

Madam Speaker, this year we have initiated new approaches in the caucus that promise even greater legislative production. We have inaugurated a series of Women's Caucus hearings and we now have 14 issue teams, each led by a Republican and a Democratic Member. My cochair, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Mrs. JOHNSON], and I have worked hard in the tradition of prior Republican and Democratic co-chairs, the gentlewoman from Maryland [Mrs. MORELLA] and the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. LOWEY], former Congresswomen Liz Holtzman and Margaret Heckler, former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder and former Representative and now Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE.

Tonight we are throwing ourselves a party. We hope to see our colleagues there.

SUPPORT THE 21ST CENTURY PATENT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. COBLE] is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. COBLE. Madam Speaker, I want to respond to the unfounded and increasingly bizarre criticism of H.R. 400, the 21st Century Patent System Improvement Act.

Throughout the winter and spring of the current session, I have been involved with the writing, reshaping, and marshaling support for H.R. 400. While I understand that the legislative process is necessarily deliberate and often contentious, I confess my ongoing amazement that this bill has engendered so much controversy.

Madam Speaker, we are not talking about a red meat issue that divides people on partisan ideological lines. This is not a subject matter that hits at the gut or tears at the heart. This is not gun control, abortion, or the death penalty. This is a patent bill, but significant to America's economic well-being.

Now, for most people the words "patent bill" are sufficient to induce sleep. For a small minority, however, it inspires a level of paranoia that reaches biblical proportions. I recently witnessed two floor critiques of H.R. 400 and S. 507 and the experience was quite revealing, Madam Speaker.

Previously, I was led to believe that my exclusive motivation in sponsoring H.R. 400 was to destroy the U.S. patent system. But no, I am far more ambitious. I have now learned that Senator HATCH and I are part of a nefarious plot designed to ruin the United States of America financially.

Madam Speaker, the two orations through which I sat were, charitably considered, devoid of factual content. Worst still, however, were the base metaphors and clichés invoked to drive home the opposition's point. There were references to secret deals with the Japanese Government that will enable Japanese corporations, Chinese corporations, huge multinationalists, and if it can be believed, the People's Liberation Army, to bully the little guy and brutalize Americans.

Representatives from American corporations were criticized for having talked to Congressmen and were clearly identified as members of the enemy. Presently, the paranoid jumble was tied together and we learned that H.R. 400 and S. 507 constitute the first fight in a war that, if not won on our opponents' terms, will result in the complete internationalization of American economic activity and the total elimination of our liberty. I recall no mention of black helicopters or drug trafficking by the Queen of England, but such testimony is sure to follow.

Madam Speaker, for anyone who cares to know the facts, H.R. 400 and S. 507 are forward-thinking attempts to make our current patent system even stronger. Both bills would allow the Patent and Trademark Office to operate more like a business on a day-to-day basis, while subjecting the agency to congressional and executive oversight.

Good faith users of the patent system, those who the Constitution was intended to protect, will be guaranteed a minimum of 17 years of patent term and, in most instances, will receive more than 18 years.

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Far from hurting applicants, the publication feature of H.R. 400, or what is left of it, will inhibit patent submarining, which does indeed harm American businesses and generally violates the constitutional spirit of patent policy. Both bills also create a new patent pending right, along with a commercial use defense for inventors who do not have the resources to file for protection. And companies which pedal application scams to innocent inventors will be punished severely under H.R. 400.

A well-known American inventor once wrote, "with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance